

NORTHWEST ADVENTISTS IN ACTION

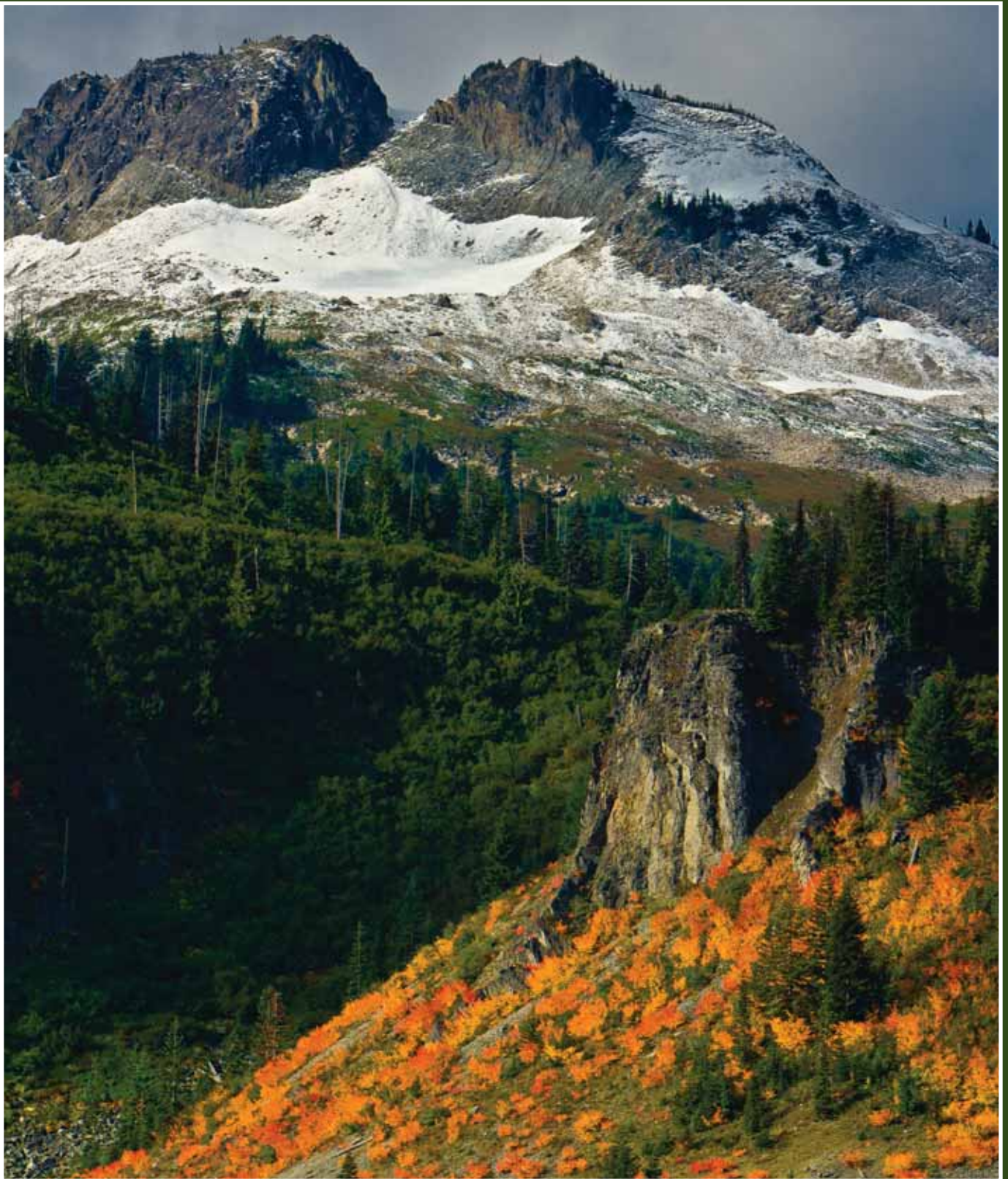
Gleaner

NOVEMBER 2012
Vol. 107, No. 11

2012 NPUC
**PATHFINDER
CAMPOREE**
Brings 2,000 to Astoria

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IMAGES OF CREATION



*Enter His gates with thanksgiving and His courts with praise;
give thanks to Him and praise His name.*
PSALMS 100:4 (NIV)

'Fall and Fresh Snow' by Gary State of Gaston, Oregon.

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November 2012 | Vol. 107, No. 11

GLEANER, (ISSN 0746-5874) is published once per month for a total of 12 issues per year by the North Pacific Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists®, 5709 N. 20th St., Ridgefield, WA 98642. It is printed and mailed at Pacific Press Publishing Association®, 1350 N. Kings Rd., Nampa, ID 83687-3193. Subscription rate: \$13 per year. Periodical postage paid at Ridgefield, WA 98642 and additional mailing offices.

POSTMASTER: send all address changes to:

North Pacific Union Conference
GLEANER, 5709 N. 20th St., Ridgefield, WA 98642
Phone: 360-857-7000
gleaner@nw.npuc.org
www.gleaneronline.org

SUBMISSIONS: Timely announcements, features, news stories and family notices for publication in the *GLEANER* may be submitted directly to the project manager at the address listed above. Material sent directly to local conference correspondents may be forwarded to the *GLEANER*.

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Letters

WAYNE BLAKELY ... READERS RESPOND

A Choice of Surrender

What a powerful article you included in the September issue of the *GLEANER*. I was moved by Wayne's testimony ["A Question of Identity"] and the power of God to help each one of us in our temptations and weaknesses. Like he said, we all fight with temptation, and the path of self-denial, surrender and choosing to live each day as a new creation in Christ Jesus is our safety. Thank you, Wayne, for sharing your testimony as you claim Rev. 12:11 and allowing God to empower you daily. The choice you have made to surrender your feelings to the lover of our souls has encouraged me personally in my battles. A wholehearted amen to Scott Lemert's article ["Jane Meets the Adventists"]!

Risë Rafferty, Fall Creek, Ore.

Avoid Clobber Texts

I have gay friends. They are law-abiding, intelligent, loving, spiritual people. They in no way are like the sex-crazed mob that are wanting to forcible [sic] gang-rape Lot's guests. They are not like the people of Romans 1 who are building images of wood, rejecting God and being filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed and depravity, etc. (Romans 1:20+). I am amazed and disappointed when people use these two verses as some of their clobber texts.

Ellsworth Wellman, Yakima, Wash.

Gaining a Fresh Resolve

There are many sins, all grievous to God ... One of the most alarming is the Laodecian plague. The Holy Spirit has spoken through Wayne in a most profound and encouraging way, and I walk away with a fresh resolve to keep my focus on Jesus.

Bobbie Vedvick, Concrete, Wash.

SGA Producer Responds

Thank you for opening the conversation in this past *GLEANER* about how the church should treat its gay and lesbian members. It is time for a new approach to this conversation, and I appreciated the tone of this piece,

which wasn't strident. I appreciated the acknowledgement in your opening comments that not every gay or lesbian Adventist has found the path of celibacy that Wayne Blakely testifies for to be one that they are called to. Our film, which you mention, *Seventh-Gay Adventists*, follows the spiritual journeys of three gay and lesbian Adventists over two years as they wrestle with these big questions about what God requires, what room there is for them in their church, where they can take their children on Sabbath mornings, and how do they reconcile their deeply held faith with their sexual orientation. What I've found in these past four years of listening to dozens and dozens of stories is that what seems completely black and white becomes more complicated when you know real people and real stories, when you've shared a Sabbath with a gay couple and their children, when you get to really know someone who is gay/lesbian (and they've just prayed for your newborn daughter), when you've heard story after story of attempted suicide and despair after feeling rejected by God, and especially by God's people.

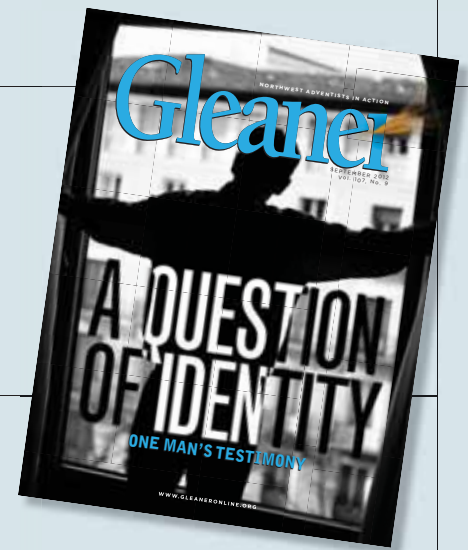
Daneen Akers, Seventh-Gay Adventists co-producer

Timely Article

Your articles on homosexuality are timely and judiciously written. Thanks for stepping up to the plate regarding this overwhelming social/political wave that is affecting Christians everywhere.

Tom Stafford, Vancouver, Wash.

... Continued on page 30



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Send letters, stories, photos
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Alone Means Alone

You've heard the expression, "What part of 'no' don't you understand?" I would like us to consider another word. The word is "alone."

I don't mean alone in the sense of "lonely"; rather, alone in the sense of "only." If we are told that the only way to make it out of this world alive is through the merits of Jesus' life and His death in our place on the cross, could we assume there is not a second or third way that just might work? Seems pretty clear doesn't it? "There is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:12, KJV). There is just one and only one way: Jesus.

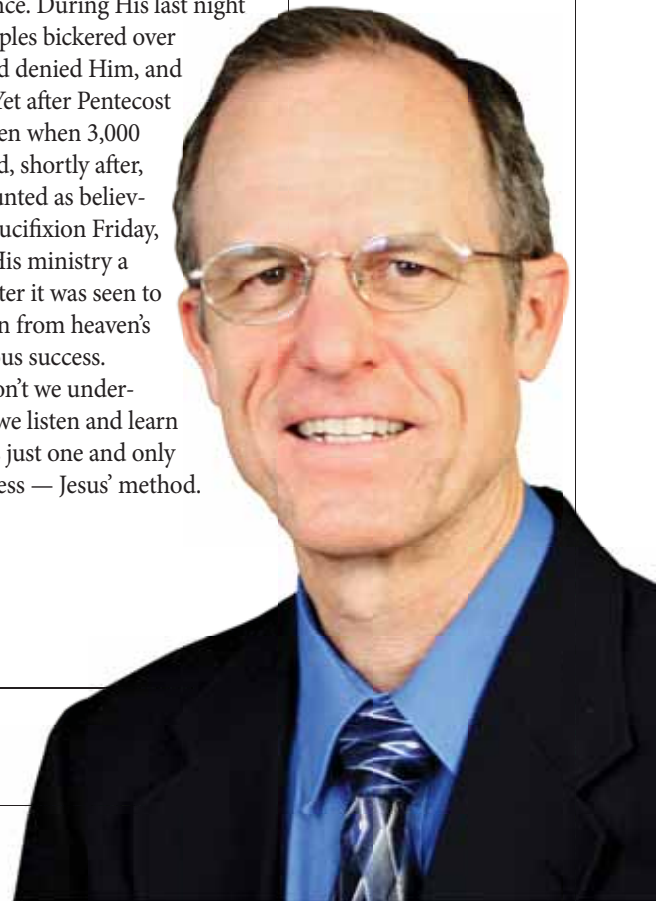
What about the method for fulfilling the mission that Jesus gave us in reaching the North Pacific Union Conference (NPUC) territory for Him? Are there many ways to succeed in this area, or is there an "only" way that we have somehow missed or relegated to a back burner? No question that many different methods have been tried. Some seem to have a certain degree of success, while others fall flat. How do we know the best way?

Many of us are familiar with a powerful and thought-provoking quote from the pen of Ellen White. Please consider the critical word "alone" as you read: "Christ's method alone will give true success in reaching the people. The Savior mingled with men as one who desired their good. He showed His sympathy for them, ministered to their needs, and won their confidence. Then He bade them, 'Follow Me'" (*Ministry of Healing*, p. 143).

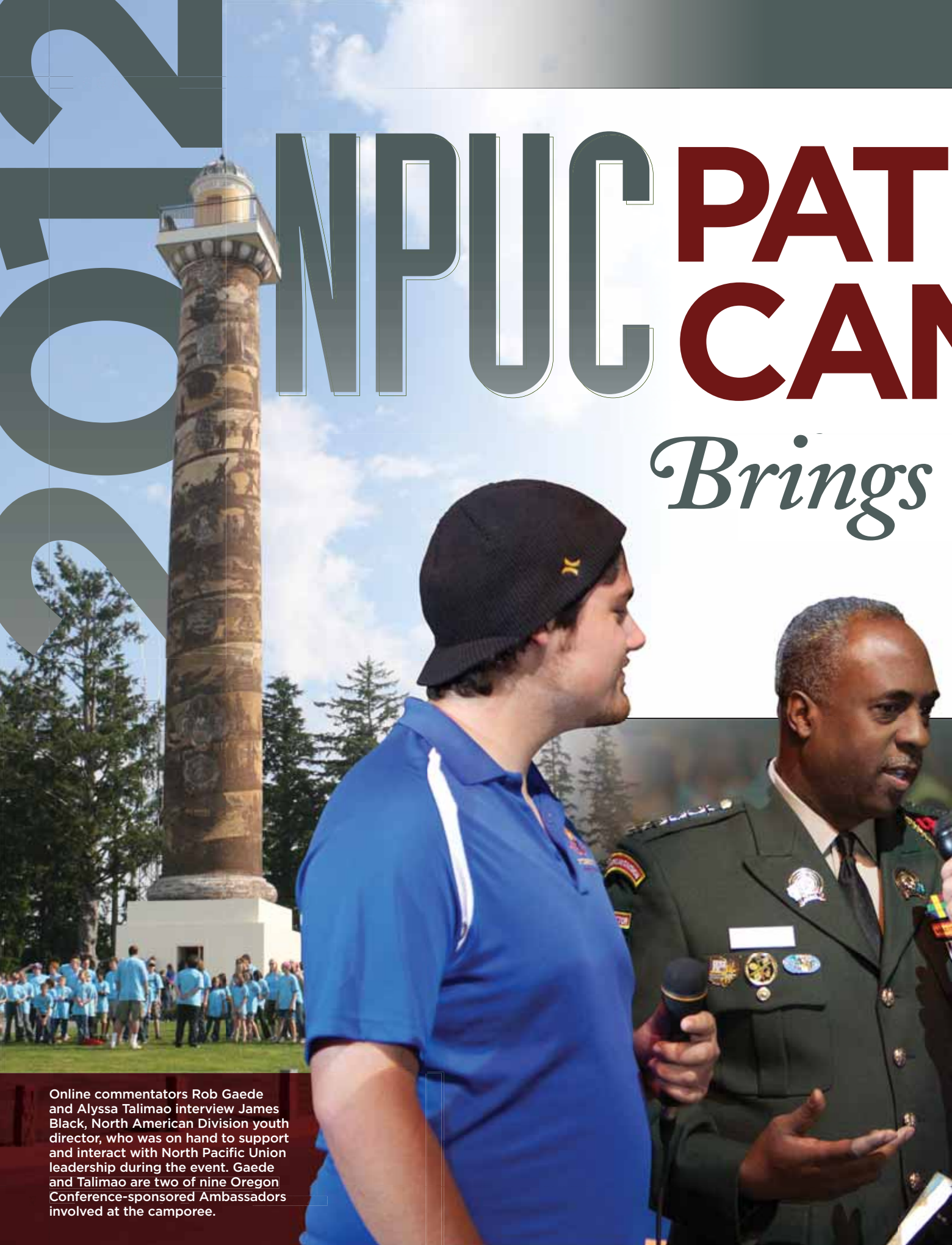
It is easy to read this quote and miss or minimize that one word. Alone. It means only or one and only. True success in reaching our neighbors in the NPUC for Jesus can happen only by using the methods He used when on this earth. If we are His body, won't we look and act like He acted? Won't we do the things that He did in the way that He did them?

I believe that if we use "Christ's method" we will get results. It is true that they may be slower in coming initially and harder to quantify, but should that stop us from following His method? Things didn't look very hopeful at the cross for all of Christ's 33 years of mingling, sympathizing, ministering and winning people's confidence. During His last night before the cross, His disciples bickered over position, forsook Him and denied Him, and one even betrayed Him! Yet after Pentecost the fruit of His life was seen when 3,000 were baptized in a day and, shortly after, 5,000 men alone were counted as believers (Acts 2:41, 4:4). On crucifixion Friday, some would have called His ministry a failure, but a few weeks later it was seen to be what it always had been from heaven's perspective ... a tremendous success.

What part of "alone" don't we understand? Isn't it about time we listen and learn from the Master? There is just one and only one method for true success — Jesus' method.



MERLIN KNOWLES
MONTANA CONFERENCE PRESIDENT



NPUC PAT CAN *Brings*

Online commentators Rob Gaede and Alyssa Talimao interview James Black, North American Division youth director, who was on hand to support and interact with North Pacific Union leadership during the event. Gaede and Talimao are two of nine Oregon Conference-sponsored Ambassadors involved at the camporee.

H FINDER M P O R E E



2,000 to Astoria

You'd have to be at a camporee to understand: Northwest Pathfinders and their leaders are a special breed.



Gary McLain

Tracy Wood, Oregon Conference Pathfinder director and local host for the Astoria camporee, gets ready to issue instructions during one of the weekend events.

More than 2,000 of them were on hand as Astoria, Oregon, skies blazed with sunshine to welcome Pathfinder clubs from all points of the Northwest. They came together there for the 2012 North Pacific Union Conference Pathfinder Camporee, held September 13–16.

The dedication undergirding these organizations was pervasive. Buses, RVs, trailers, tents and local club banners stretched for acres. Adults who nurture the youth took valuable time from work to accompany them to the event. This was by no means a leisurely vacation for them, but they wouldn't have wanted it any other way.

Dignitaries from around the world church came too, but the focus was on the youth, from the evening song services to the special features. On the first full day of the camporee, clubs fanned out to the four winds on indi-



Gary McLain

FEATURE

vidual projects. Some learned the intricacies of knot-tying; others conquered the BMX course. Several clubs took excursions to the beach, hunted for lighthouses or climbed the famous Astoria Column.

Following Sabbath morning services, many headed out to the coast near Fort Stevens for several baptisms in the Pacific Ocean — a veritable highlight for the weekend.

And that is what makes the time, the expense and the long miles worth it for so many of these young people and adults. It's why members from all around the Northwest tend to put an extra shekel or two in the offering plate each week for their local clubs. The investment there gives tangible results, infinitely better and longer lasting than the interest at their local bank.

You can find photos and videos of the 2012 Camporee linked online at npuccamporee2012.com.

Pathfinders from Pleasant Valley Church near Portland, Oregon, provide a special feature at the beginning of the Thursday evening program.



David confronts Goliath in an important lesson on humility and faith during an evening program. Drama performed by Walla Walla University students was written and produced by Rachel Scribner.



Gary McLain

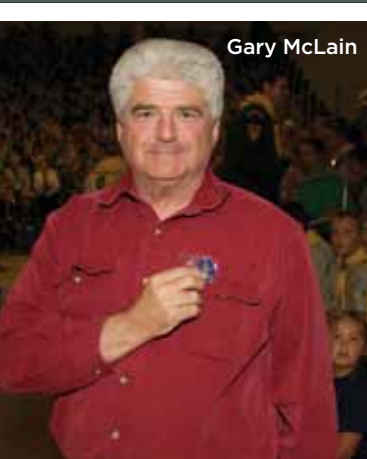
Pathfinder clubs from around the Northwest represent a tapestry of ages, from young people to senior citizens, all eager to be an active part of the Adventist mission.



Randy and Rob Folkenberg lead the opening praise music during an evening meeting in the Clatsop County Fairgrounds pavilion.



Prayer and fellowship combine during the Sabbath afternoon baptisms held in the Pacific Ocean at Fort Stevens, Oregon, west of Astoria.



Gary McLain

Pathfinders at parade-rest pause for prayer during an evening program at the 2012 Pathfinder Camporee in Astoria, Oregon.



Gary McLain

What works better to feed a hungry bunch at lunch than a serving of haystacks?

Willis Van Dusen, Astoria mayor, welcomed the weekend crowd to the fairgrounds and received an event pin for his effort. "I was touched just feeling the energy in this room," he said. "These are not casual Christians; these are not lukewarm people. When you come in here, you can just feel the love and feel the faith."



Gary McLain

Pathfinders come in all shapes, sizes and ... species. Boo Boy, a help dog for Virginia Rima, accompanies the Gospel Warriors Pathfinder Club from Federal Way, Washington.

Each Pathfinder club at the camporee had a unique sign or banner at their campsite. Here, the colorful trailer for the Cascade Eagles rests alongside their creative sign and larger-than-life marshmallows, brought all the way from Burlington, Washington.



Gary McLain



ACCION

Milagro en la Cárcel de Hillsboro

Necesité ropa, y me vistieron; estuve enfermo, y me atendieron; estuve en la cárcel, y me visitaron” (Mateo 25:36).

Nuestro Padre es complacido cuando ayudamos a sus hijos. Lo que pide no requiere mucho dinero. Jesús habla de actos de servicio que cualquiera, aún el más pobre, puede hacer. A veces los miembros de la iglesia se preguntan con toda sinceridad, “¿Qué puedo hacer para ofrecer mejor servicio al Señor?” Aquí está la respuesta. No pensemos solamente en los talentos destacados, sino en el servicio sencillo y humilde de todos los días.



Miguel y Marilyn dando testimonio en el Campestre Hispano de Oregon.

Eso pasó con unos de nuestros miembros de la Iglesia de Hillsboro que por circunstancias llegó a parar en la cárcel de Hillsboro. Allí tiene un encuentro con el Señor y de rodillas en su celda le dice a Jesús que quiere ser un misionero en ese lugar.



Miguel, uno de los presos dando testimonio en el campestre Hispano de Oregon.

Comienza a predicar el evangelio, un compañero lo oye, avisa a otro y de la noche a la mañana tiene 25 presos que lo están escuchando. Una mañana de sábado, la mamá de uno de esos presos condenado a cadena perpetua, visita nuestra iglesia y nos comenta entre lágrimas que quiere que visitemos a sus hijos. Junto con el hermano Camerino nos dirigimos a la cárcel a visitar a Jorge Reyes.

La sorpresa es tremenda, al visitarlo, Jorge conoce la Biblia perfectamente, habla de las verdades distintivas adventistas, como si hubiera estado en la iglesia durante muchos años. Nos comenta que muchos presos hispanos están estudiando la Biblia con éste hermano adventista y él y muchos más están aceptando a Jesús como su Salvador personal. Organizamos el ministerio de visitación en la cárcel. Los pedidos de visitas son tantos que tenemos que organizarnos entre los tres

pastores de Hillsboro con algunos hermanos de la iglesia para poder alcanzar a todos los presos hispanos que quieren ser visitados en la cárcel.

Una mañana de sábado, Camerino se dirige a la cárcel, y en la puerta, una señora muy bien vestida le pregunta si él es pastor y si esta visitando a los presos. Él le comenta que sí. Ella le da el nombre de Miguel Vázquez Casillas que es su hijo, y que le gustaría que lo visite.

Camerino visita a este muchacho y le comenta que su madre le ha dado su nombre, la sorpresa es tremenda cuando Miguel Ángel le dice que su

madre no ha podido darle su nombre porque ella no puede visitarlo ya que no vive en el área. Miguel Ángel le dice que él ha empezado a estudiar la Biblia hace unas semanas y cree que esa señora que le ha dado su nombre en la puerta es un ángel, porque él le pidió al Señor que alguien cristiano lo pudiera visitar.

Hoy, doce de esos presos ya han aceptado a Jesús como su Salvador personal y son miembros de nuestra iglesia de Hillsboro. Tres familias de esos presos están estudiando la Biblia con nosotros y están haciendo planes para entregar su vida a Jesús.

Le doy gracias al Señor por este milagro maravilloso y le doy gracias a Jesús porque la iglesia de Hillsboro está haciendo suyo ese mensaje de Mateo 25:36: “Estuve en la cárcel, y me visitaron.”

Alejandro Delgado, pastor de la Iglesia Hispana de Hillsboro



Couple Embarks on Arctic Mission Adventure

After Fred Grant graduated from the Walla Walla University School of Theology, he and his wife, Kellie, wanted to dedicate their lives to something unique and different, so they chose Alaska, the Last Frontier.

The Grants became a part of the Alaska Mission Adventure, a self-supporting mission endeavor to reach arctic Alaska. The pair moved in July to the remote village of Savoonga on the northern coast of St. Lawrence Island in the Bering Sea. Savoonga is inhabited by Siberian Yupik Eskimos, with a population of about 600.

Known as the “Walrus Carving Capital of the World,” walrus, whale, seal and reindeer comprise 80 percent of the islanders’ diet.

Since the Grants’ arrival, weekly church services have been conducted in the recently refurbished church building. They are excited about their ministry and solicit your prayers. They would love to receive communication in this remote village. You can email them at Kelliesman2002@yahoo.com.

Ken Crawford, Alaska Conference president



Fred and Kelli Grant are working as self-supporting missionaries in Savoonga, a village on St. Lawrence Island in the Bering Sea.

Anchorage Northside Church Expands Food Pantry

Because of its downtown location, the Anchorage Northside Church decided about six years ago to expand its food pantry to better serve the local community. With the assistance of Alaska Community Services, the church purchased a refrigerator and freezer and expanded into a large room in the church’s fellowship area.

Donna Hiratsuka, Northside Church Community Services co-leader, assists a food pantry client.

Though the pantry is open only two hours each week (one hour during Wednesday prayer meeting and another on Sabbath after church), Donna Hiratsuka, Northside’s Community Services co-leader, says they serve 180 clients representing about 1,000 people each month. Sabbath can be especially busy, as many have discovered that Northside

Church serves a visitors’ luncheon after church services each Sabbath. Food pantry clients are invited to eat and fellowship with church members.

Several clients come early enough to attend church, and many have asked for Bibles and other church-related materials. They repeatedly say how thankful they are for the food pantry.

“It can be challenging finding sufficient supplies for the pantry,” says Hiratsuka, “but we believe that we are planting the seeds that will ripen into God’s harvest.”

Nita Larson, Anchorage Northside Church elder



(From left) Herbert Joseph, Sheila Schroeder and Donna Hiratsuka volunteer at the Anchorage Northside food pantry.



Caldwell Experiments With Community Bible Study

In April and May, Jim Berglund, Caldwell Church pastor, tried a new experiment. Instead of the typical evangelistic series, he opened the Community Bible Study.

This approach, with studies conducted every weekday at noon and repeated at 6 p.m. for three full weeks, is more low-key than a traditional series. It uses a study format with questions and answers filled out by the participant on printed lessons. Instead of Revelation and prophecy, the main theme is righteousness by faith. Doctrines, including unique Adventist truths, are presented in a relational framework. The classroom style allows questions that tailor the study more to the individual.

Another part of the experiment involved using more direct advertising to invite people. Members were asked to invite friends and neighbors, although none of the guests actually came from this method. Several weeks prior to the event, a community survey was taken door to door with the Bible study as one of its options. An invitation to the Community Bible Study was given to those who expressed interest.

Inactive members, non-member spouses, non-baptized attendees and others who might benefit from the study were personally invited, and invitation cards were distributed in the neighborhood. A Bible study card was mailed to part of the community two weeks before the meetings



began. Although these yielded no guests at the Community Bible Study, seven Bible study requests came in and were followed up.

Two of the six Bible study guests came from advertisements on Craigslist and community bulletin boards. One came from a personal invitation to join the Bible study evaluation program, which offered \$75 to evaluate the lessons. Berglund directly invited the remaining guests.

“We have made some new friends, all of whom are attending our worship services,” reports Berglund. “It has been a wonderful experiment, and we have shared the gospel and our faith with some new people. ... All in all it has been a success.”

DeeAnn Reedy, Caldwell Church communication leader



Jim Berglund, Caldwell Church pastor, shares some ideas visually during the innovative Community Bible Study series.

Mount Ellis Academy Welcomes New Faces

For the past six academic years, Mount Ellis Academy (MEA) in Bozeman enjoyed the continuity of an unchanged staff. But this past summer saw the staff saying farewell to two much-loved teachers.

Monte Saxby relocated to Skagit Adventist School in Burlington, Wash., where he teaches math to various grade levels. During his years at MEA he brought depth to the math program and was the de facto leader of the MEA sports team supporters, the Blue Crew.

Anita Strawn de Ojeda followed her husband, Pedro, as he took over duties as the new principal at Holbrook (Ariz.) Indian School. Through Strawn de Ojeda's years at MEA, students received a greater appreciation for literature and senior plays were incredibly memorable.

In their places come Matthew Lukens and Matthew Engle. Here's a bit more information about them and other new staff members.

MATTHEW LUKENS

Before coming to MEA, Lukens and his wife, Amy, were in Chicago, where he taught English at North Shore Adventist Academy for six years. They have already fallen in love with Montana, saying, "If Bozeman



is the dimple on the face of Montana, Mount Ellis is part of what makes this place so wonderful." They have two dogs and are expecting their first child.

MATTHEW ENGLE

Engle taught two years of math in China before getting married this summer and moving to Bozeman. Teaching all the math classes MEA has to offer and helping coach soccer keeps him busy.



He and his wife, Marisa, enjoy traveling, cooking, hiking and camping.

MUFFY GRAHAM

"Mount Ellis kind of gets in your blood," Graham says as she explains why she came back to MEA. Graham



and her youngest daughter, Shelby, moved from Kalispell so that Shelby could attend MEA. Graham works in the cafeteria as the assistant cook and likes to garden.

RICK BINDER

Binder is the boys' assistant dean and brings a unique perspective, having graduated from MEA only three years ago. He loves rock climbing, backpacking and helping coach soccer. He thinks MEA is a great school, and he loves working with the faculty and students.



CODY GREENWOOD

After four years away, Greenwood has returned as the assistant maintenance



director at MEA. He says he missed being at MEA because he loves the area and likes how MEA incorporates the outdoors into school.

Ashley Peterson, MEA marketing director

CAA 'Expotition' Exceeds Expectations

When the idea of an “ex-potition”^{*} was tossed around between Larry Hiday, Columbia Adventist Academy (CAA) science instructor, and local backpacking guru Randy Givens, there was simply the intention of introducing students to backpacking and “God’s second book,” nature.

But brainstorming often takes people where they have no intention of going and produces novel ideas. So six neophyte backpackers and four experienced instructors combined forces July 10 to experience a novel approach to education: combining formal instruction in geology, research methods and biology with informal instruction in backpacking skills and etiquette. Novelties for this learning experience included location, technology and diet (to say nothing of the “school bathroom facilities”).

The first week of the two-week class was spent on Mount St. Helens, and then it moved to Olympic National Park for the second week. The “class-



Jamey Cooper’s wilderness teaching included iPad technology.

room” change from day to day often provided the chance for students to honestly say that they “had to walk miles to get to school, and it was uphill both ways.” With journals in hand, students hiked the trails, identifying wildflowers, trees, birds and snakes.

Observations made during the first week led to research projects and data collection during the second week. Again, novelty was abundant as research subjects varied from

spider populations to tree ratios and moss niches. Probably more novel than anything else was the fact that electronic technology was reserved for scientific equipment during the two weeks. While students adjusted to their lack of media that current culture demands they be “plugged into,” they readily adapted to using equipment that instructors Jamey and Allen Cooper purchased or “raided” from Loma Linda University. The equipment in-

cluded two iPads, a clinometer, calipers, laser pointers, and a non-contact infrared thermometer gun with laser targeting for distance temperature readings. As for the diet, students learned that couscous with pine nuts and Thai noodles with peanut sauce can provide an elegant evening of dining even if you’re far from your favorite restaurant.

Students enjoyed the views and wildlife of the mountains, the solitude of the campsites, “skiing” the remaining snow patches, and experiencing something they’d never done before. Konrad McClure, CAA freshman, summed up his experience as he fixed couscous for his family after returning to civilization, “I’m independent and self-contained now.”

**defined by Christopher Robin in Winnie the Pooh, “Chapter Eight: in which Christopher Robin leads an Expotition to the North Pole” as “a long line of everybody” to “discover something.”*

Virlys Moller, CAA English instructor, with Larry Hiday



Allen Cooper and students discuss research methods.



Harris photographs the classroom “carpet.”

Cottage Grove Member Among Nation's Top Public Works Leaders



Peggy Keppler, Cottage Grove Church member, was recognized as one of the nation's "Top 10 Public Works Leaders of the Year" in August.

Peggy Keppler, Cottage Grove Church member, has been named one of the nation's "Top 10 Public Works Leaders of the Year." This honor, recognizing outstanding career service achievements, was awarded by the American Public Works Association at their annual convention in Anaheim, Calif., in August.

Keppler is the city engineering development review manager for Eugene, Ore. She is known as an individual who is committed to building and nurturing community relationships, strengthening teams, and mentoring her staff as well as young engineering professionals. She has a reputation for a strong work ethic, for fairness in dealing with challenging issues, and for taking a reasonable, collaborative approach to solving problems. Kurt Corey,

the city's public works director, says, "Peggy has distinguished herself as one of the true leaders in the public works profession today. She has a solid record of achievement and has devoted her career to leaving things better than she found them."

In addition to her busy work activities, Keppler finds time to volunteer with the American Red Cross and the Cottage Grove Community Emergency Response Team and to help regularly with a free meal program in Eugene. She has served on the Cottage Grove Church board, has been involved with prison ministries in Salem, and traveled with fellow church members to Kenya for evangelism and health mission outreach.

Tamara Gryte, Cottage Grove Church communication leader

Seniors Win Souls in O'Brien

Senior citizens Jasper Sossong and John Bazen, with the faithful help of the Holy Spirit, have planted a church in O'Brien, Ore.

Each Sabbath afternoon a group of 20-25 people meet in a small trailer to study God's Word. Lois Taylor, also a senior, leads the Bible study.

Each Sabbath someone else joins the faithful group. A retired contractor from Grants Pass, Ore., drives more than 100 miles each Sabbath to worship there. He and Sossong are also visiting

prospective members in the community.

Two ladies from the area have taken their stand in baptism and are now bringing their friends to the new church in the trailer.

These senior citizens have a vision of what God wants them to do in their spare time. As 85-year-old Sossong says, "It sure beats sitting in my rocking chair."

Patty Hyland, Cave Junction Church communication leader



Donna Devine and Carla Bricker spent months studying the Bible with Lois Taylor. They now are helping to establish the O'Brien Church.

Woodburn Holds First VBS in Decades

For a small congregation like the Woodburn Community Church, a summer Vacation Bible School might seem like an impossible goal. Only a handful of children regularly attend each Sabbath, and the church last hosted a VBS 20 years ago.

Eddie Ciobanu, Woodburn pastor, and many church members recognized the need for this type of ministry and prayed about it for several months. When Cindy Hepler, Molalla Church member, led the Bible Buckeroo VBS at the Molalla Church in July, Ciobanu asked if she would repeat the program at Woodburn.

Hepler agreed and brought seven Molalla Church young adults to assist. Woodburn Community Church members provided their time and resources as well.

The VBS crew welcomed 12 children the first day. Attendees were given a cowboy hat and a



Woodburn Community Church enjoys a successful summer Vacation Bible School — its first in 20 years.

bandana to wear throughout the week. They also enjoyed singing, crafts, outdoor games, Bible stories, and healthy snacks like popcorn and smoothies.

By the second day, attendance doubled. Ciobanu welcomed each child and invited them to bring their friends the following day. Flyers were distributed in the local community, and children asked their friends to come for a fun time. Some even

brought a parent or grandparent.

Fifty-two children were counted the last day. On Sabbath, 20 children came to the church for a special VBS program. The children shared VBS songs with God and the church congregation.

“I am very impressed with this church, and I am going to try to bring my children here for Sabbath School every week,” says one local parent.

Ciobanu always says, “Wherever God guides, He will provide.” Even though a VBS didn’t seem possible for the Woodburn Community Church, they had faith in God, who provided everything for it to become a reality.

Christa Healy, Woodburn Community Church communication leader

Gladstone Children Enjoy Sonrise National Park VBS

Gospel Lights Sonrise National Parks Vacation Bible School pointed kids to Jesus July 30–Aug. 3 at the Gladstone Park Church, including 12 children who do not attend church regularly.

After registration, the children, ages 5–11, donned colored scarves, vests and name tags and divided into groups named after the beaver, caribou, eagle, squirrel and wolf.

Young people with flags led the children into Mission Adventure Camp (the church sanctuary) where Sherri Uhrig, Gladstone Park Church beginners/kindergarten co-leader, introduced the program with videos, exercises, games and songs.

Then the kids rotated to various stations for Bible stories, crafts, outside games, snacks and memory verses. Those children who learned their memory verses

received a Sonrise National Parks hat and pin the last day. “It was a very fast, fun, fantastic week,” says Connie Durbin, VBS leader.

The VBS also blessed children in India as attendees and church members collected nearly \$300 to support the Asian Aid Speech and Deaf School.

Richard Cook, Gladstone Park Church communication leader



VBS team leaders celebrate a successful week at Gladstone Park Church.

PAA Pathfinders Are TLTs in Action

More than 10 percent of the Portland Adventist Academy (PAA) student body participates in the Pathfinder Teen Leadership Training (TLT) program. In all, 24 PAA students and TLTs from the Pleasant Valley Church (Happy Valley, Ore.), Sunnyside Church (Portland, Ore.) and Rockwood Church (Gresham, Ore.) clubs attended the North Pacific Union Conference Pathfinder Camporee in Astoria, Ore., in September.

TLT camporee responsibilities ranged from planning meals, grocery shopping and budgeting to leading younger Pathfinders in music and service activities like beach cleanup.

The TLT students have a lot to gain. Tracy Woods, Oregon Conference youth ministries associate director, says, "Our Pathfinders department and Walla Walla University are granting TLT scholarships for students who participate in Teen Leadership Training throughout their academy or high school years." Stephanie Graham, a 2012 PAA graduate, received such a scholarship.

The teens are also learning hands-on skills as they serve on church finance committees, help with church administrative duties and sometimes attend church board meetings.

Mareliza DeJesus, PAA senior



MARIA BIBB

Pleasant Valley TLTs and Pathfinders lead an Oregon beach trash cleanup during the 2012 NPUC Pathfinder Camporee in Astoria, Ore.

and Pleasant Valley Church TLT, is known for her work ethic and responsibility both at church and school. "The TLT program has helped me move past some of my comfort zones," says DeJesus. "I'm learning how to deal with other people's leadership styles and to manage group work projects."

"I know PAA's TLTs, and they are outstanding young people," Woods says. "I baptized Mareliza and have had Caleb Bibb speak in my place." TLTs hold a special place in his heart, and he wants

to know every TLT on a first-name basis. "They are my kids, my youth group," he says.

Maria Bibb, PAA teacher and parent of three TLTs, believes the TLT program is doing permanent good. "If we're going to have a growing church we need to train our kids how [to] serve and trust them with responsibilities," she says. "I believe this program is the future of our church."

Liesl Vistaunet, PAA GLEANER correspondent



GARY MCLAIN

Caleb Bibb, PAA senior and TLT, operates the live stream during the camporee.

Cave Junction Students

Join Labor Day Parade

Each year at the Labor Day Celebration Parade in Cave Junction, Ore., the Madrone Adventist Elementary School enters a decorated float, usually depicting a patriotic theme.

Willie Whitchurch, the head teacher's husband, owns a large semitruck and trailer that he drives in the parade. School members enjoy decorating the truck and wearing costumes as they ride along. The judges carefully look over the parade float, and spectators stand up,



Madrone Adventist Elementary School participates in the Cave Junction Labor Day parade each year.

shout and clap as the truck loaded with students and staff passes. School board members walk beside the truck, throwing bags of candy with literature and invitations to visit the school.

Everyone has a great time as they give the community a glimpse of Christian education in action.

Patty Hyland, Cave Junction Church communication leader

Hispanic Share the Life Campaign Involves Entire Membership



Twenty-six Hispanic congregations in Upper Columbia Conference (UCC) are working together to find out what comprehensive evangelism looks like. The two-year effort seeks to involve every member at some level, sharing the life they have in Christ.

The multi-year Share the Life campaign began in January 2012 when leaders from around the conference gathered for an evangelism and strategy training session with Bob Folkenberg, UCC president.

Following the winter training, members gathered in June during camp meeting for a special week of consecration with international evangelist Andres Portes. Once individual members captured the Share the Life vision, the next step

was to intentionally cultivate kingdom friendships. Friendships often yield opportunities to share Jesus, and that's the goal: keeping Christ part of every aspect of our lives.

The campaign entered the midway public phase in September. It began with a week-long series of meetings with Alejandro Bullon. Bullon, an international evangelist, has been working with the Hispanic churches in the UCC for the past five years. His leadership, preaching and audio sermons that members have distributed have resulted in more than 1,000 baptisms.

Bullon's visit this year had a three-fold purpose. First, he came to visit the seven new churches established over the past five years by local mem-



José Rojas and a talented group of musicians provide worship music during meetings specifically aimed at second-generation Hispanic young people.



José Rojas shares the relentless love of Jesus.

bers he trained. In addition, he worked to train church leaders in motivating people to return to Jesus. Finally, Bullon, like John the Baptist, laid the ground work for the main reaping meetings with José Rojas, North American Division volunteer ministries director.

Rojas arrived in mid-September for a week and a half of nonstop meetings in three Washington cities: Pasco, College Place and Yakima. "It was exciting to be part of the

first-ever outreach specifically for second-generation Hispanic young people," says Austin Nystrom, youth pastor for the Hispanic churches in the Tri-Cities area. "Rojas' mix of languages and varied approach was brilliant." Second-generation Hispanics are a rapidly growing American demographic, largely unreached by the Adventist Church.

This groundbreaking series of meetings met its mark. People responded every night to

Rojas' down-to-earth presentation of the gospel. Typically more than 100 people came forward during the closing appeals. "The core message that we are relentlessly loved by a good God really hit home," says Nystrom.

Of those making decisions for Jesus, two young people stand out. From non-Christian backgrounds, they only recently began hanging out with the Tri-Cities Adventist youth. At the end, they came forward and expressed a desire to start digging deeper.

The churches teamed up with the North Pacific Union Conference media evangelism team led by Todd Gessele, new outreach media director. Gessele says, "Beyond being a live reaping event for the local churches, our goal is to reach an additional 20,000 people online and through numerous Spanish-language broadcast

outlets around the world."

The final stage of the Share the Life campaign takes place next year. First of all, local pastors are identifying people in each church to serve as preachers, public evangelists, in-home Bible study teachers and in-church Bible instructors. In addition to this critical lay involvement, each congregation has plans for three week-long evangelistic meetings in March, September and December 2013.

As this unified effort to Share the Life progresses, your prayers are vital. Please pray that the vision members have captured will continue to burn brightly. Pray that the Holy Spirit will continue to be poured out on hearts seeking to know the one Friend who never fails and is the true Source of Life.

Jay Wintermeyer, UCC communication director



Every evening José Rojas gave people a chance to make a choice for Jesus.



Guest artist Hugo Yin leads the audience in worship each night.

Listeners Contribute Nearly \$650,000 to PLR Stations

Positive Life Radio (PLR) continues to live up to its name as it spreads a positive influence regionally and throughout the world.

Evidence of this comes from the station's fall fundraiser, as listeners contributed nearly \$650,000 to support their station.

"Once again, listeners displayed for us why we love living in the Inland Northwest," says Kevin Krueger, PLR general manager. "They continually step forward to make sure the ministry goes on so that God can continue to bless and change lives."

Those blessings can be felt around the world. For example,

as part of the fundraiser, listeners sponsored 381 Water-of-Life filters from Compassion International. These filters provide pure, safe drinking water to families living in poverty in foreign countries.

"Partnering with Compassion on the Water-of-Life filters was an incredible win-win and a wonderful Hands & Heart project reminding us that we can help both local ministries and international ministries," Krueger says. "We are praying for the water filters as they are distributed to families in need over the next few months."

The Positive Life Radio Network is a cooperative effort of 17 broadcast outlets around the

Inland Northwest in Washington, Oregon and Idaho. The stations are owned by Upper Columbia Conference, Growing Christian Foundation and Walla Walla University. For

more information about the Positive Life Radio ministry, or to listen online, visit plr.org.

Kevin Waite, PLR news correspondent

Kevin Krueger, Positive Life Radio general manager, talks on the air with Cayla Lively, Walla Walla University intern, as she shares a listener story that came in with a pledge of support.



UCA Student Food Drive Supports Local Food Bank

Upper Columbia Academy (UCA) students and staff hosted a food drive this fall to help an area food bank prepare for the upcoming holiday season. As a part of UCA's HOPE (Helping Other People Everywhere) program, students collected food and money at five grocery stores in Spokane, Wash., in the hope of helping the Second Harvest Food Bank get a kick start on the holiday season.

"We wanted to have a project where most of the junior class could work together toward a common goal, and helping Second Harvest seemed like a great idea," says



Juniors Andrew Fisher and Paul Garcia display some of the food collected during UCA's food drive.

Chelsea English, HOPE coordinator.

Although donations and giving often do not pick up until the holiday season nears, the food drive was successful. The

day was only half over when the donation boxes were overflowing with food and the cash donation cans were filling up.

"It's nice to see people care so much," says Michaela

Paulson, UCA junior. "The money and food can go a long way. It felt good to take part in helping out."

The total amount of food donated is not known, but the one-day food drive brought in nearly \$2,000 in cash donations, exceeding expectations.

"I was blown away by the amount of money people gave," English says. "Having this much success on a HOPE project is so encouraging for the kids. It shows that with a little effort, they really can make a difference."

Joe Hess, UCA GLEANER correspondent

Post Falls Sponsors North Idaho Fair Booth

With the end of summer looming in Idaho's panhandle, few things bring people together like a local fair does. A microcosm of greater society, this regional event with its many visitors provides exactly the type of field God's people need to be sowing. With that thought clearly in mind, the Post Falls (Idaho) Church decided to host a booth at the North Idaho Fair in Coeur d'Alene for the first time in several years.

The idea for the booth came less than two months before the fair, and church members had no supplies nor a budget ready. The space alone cost \$800, plus they needed literature and items



Owen Bandy, pastor of Idaho's Post Falls Church, and Lori Parker work the fair booth together as summer winds down in northern Idaho.

to give away. They decided to lean on Jesus, knowing that God was going to have to provide if the booth was to become reality. And He did.

Amid the typical fair offerings like merchandise, animals and not-so-healthy food, the Post Falls booth focused on health information and featured

health-screening equipment contributed by John Torquato, a mission-minded medical doctor in Hayden, Idaho. The booth's theme was taken from the words of Ellen White: "The work of health reform connected with the present truth for this time, is a power for good. It is the right hand of the gospel, and often opens fields for the entrance of the gospel" (*Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 112).

Seeing their faith and hard work blessed in such a way was both humbling and even more faith-building for the Post Falls Church members.

Chuck Stilwell, Post Falls Church Bible worker coordinator

Media Missionaries Share Experiences With Kettle Falls

Kettle Falls (Wash.) Church members and guests learned about Bill and Venie Osborn's mission work in Thailand during a special presentation in September. The Osborns

Bill Osborn helps produce local-language programs at Thailand's All-Asia Media Center.



became the All-Asia Media Center director and production scheduler in 2009, shortly after they retired.

The All-Asia Media Center is a dual effort started by Jon

Wood, Jesus For Asia's director, and Pastor Phamor, a retired visionary of Thailand's Karen people. Phamor had land and saw the need for a media center. While the studio was still in the construction phase, the Osborns joined Rick and Judy Hernandez, from the Eugene (Ore.) Church, to work on the building project.

Completed last summer, the studio includes two production sets used by pastors and other speakers to present the Adventist message through local-language programming in a nation that is less than 1 percent Christian. More than

1,000 DVDs have already been produced, and hopefully programs will soon be beamed across Southeast Asia via satellite.

In addition to the Osborns, who are volunteers serving at their own expense, two Americans and two nationals help produce the programs and DVDs. Plans have been made to train other Thai workers to help.

For more information about this mission project, visit jfathailand.org.

Marilyn Morgan, Kettle Falls Church communication leader

Schools See Increased Enrollment

After a number of years of declining enrollment, Washington Conference educators are experiencing an overall increase in enrollment by 23 students this year, with an opening K–12 enrollment of 1,338 students (897 elementary and 441 secondary).

Under the theme of PACE (Personalized Adventist Christian Education) families are finding these schools in interesting ways.

One family was listening to Radio of Hope (KROH-FM) from Port Townsend. They heard about Adventist education and contacted the one-room school in Stanwood. David Johnson, school board chairman, and Bob Marcus, head teacher, visited with the

family members, who decided to enroll two students.

A Mormon family just walked into the Northwest Christian School in Puyallup, looking for a school that would recognize and enhance their academically gifted, seventh-grade boy. After noticing the personalized, friendly environment in the seventh- and eighth-grade room and visiting with Craig Mattson, principal, and Don Mundy, homeroom teacher, they happily enrolled their son. They believe their son will flourish both academically and spiritually in Adventist education.

At Cedarbrook Adventist Christian School in Port Hadlock, a family visited the school looking for a different environment for their second-grader. Greg Reseck, head teacher, showed them the classrooms and the program. They immediately signed up their child. The fifth-grade older brother came along to school on the first day and asked to visit just for that day. He liked what he saw and was soon enrolled.

Adventist education is often the best-kept secret in town as a quality curriculum, personalized instruction, opportunities for leadership formation and a Spirit-filled faculty all come together to provide the very best in Christian education for our children and young people.

Kelly Bock, Washington Conference vice president for education



A new school year provides opportunities to learn and grow. These students from Orcas Christian School in Eastsound are excited about learning and forming new friendships.



Every morning of the school year, Ron Trautwein, principal, welcomes students to Buena Vista Adventist Elementary School in Auburn.



The school year is off to a great start at Cedarbrook Adventist Christian School in Port Hadlock. Students are learning a variety of subjects including an archaeology unit in which they identify original and reproduction artifacts.

the **BIG**
PICTURE
of ministry

You are invited to join Washington Conference's new interactive prayer ministry.

DISCOVER MORE:

WASHINGTONCONFERENCE.ORG

Sabbath Keepers Motorcycle Ministry

Makes Friends in Bonney Lake

The Northwest chapter of the Sabbath Keepers Motorcycle Ministry (SKMM) hosted their first public literature booth at Bonney Lake Days on Aug. 19–20.

Bonney Lake Days is a local festival that annually features a parade, 5K run, car show, live music, fireworks show and several local vendors.

The SKMM booth offered free literature, photographs on the motorcycles, children's activities (including temporary tattoos) and prizes. Approximately 100 books and Bibles were given to booth visitors, and lots of new friendships were formed as ministry members talked with motorcycle owners



Children love the temporary tattoos while parents view a selection of Christian literature provided by the Sabbath Keepers Motorcycle Ministry.

and enthusiasts.

Several non-attending Adventists who visited the booth expressed delight that the ministry exists. One Adventist, who

relocated to the area, received a full set of Spirit of Prophecy books and a Bible because he missed these books after they were left at his previous address.

The ministry made friends with neighboring vendors and had spirited discussions with clergy from other churches who came by the booth. Some SKMM members who donated blood at the Bloodmobile were treated by nurses to bandages that matched the blue and yellow of the ministry's patches.

If you would like to learn more about SKMM's Northwest chapter, check out Sabbath Keepers Northwest on Facebook. SKMM is a ministry of the North American Division with multiple chapters. Learn more at skmm-national.org.

Lisa Ulrich, SKMM Northwest chapter member

Startup Members Are Determined

to Help Their Community

This year the Startup Church in Sultan, Wash., conducted two Lifestyle Matters seminars and started a community work bee ministry.

Velma Collings, Startup women's ministries director, led Simple Solutions one night each week for four weeks in October and November. A supportive staff helped the programs go smoothly. On average, 18–20 people attended each meeting to learn about addictions, lifestyle choices and nutrition.

Living Free was presented weekly for six weeks by Startup members Vicki Griffin and Evelyn Kissinger, who shared interesting information by

DVD and PowerPoint and facilitated discussion groups. Food samples were available each evening. Everyone went away with information to form better habits to live free from bad habits.

The Lord also impressed Startup Church members to start a ministry serving people in the church or out in the community who need help with anything around their homes that they can't do for themselves.

The church had its first work bee on July 22. Volunteers went to a member's farm who desperately needed help. They weeded the corn field and picked

raspberries. Loving people from the Monroe Church came and helped too.

During the next work bee, members helped a lady clean up her yard.

These are just two examples of how Startup Church is

helping the community and the church family as it lives the motto, "Whatever the need is, we want to do the Lord's work and help out."

Jean Ludwig, Startup Church communication leader

Startup Church is helping the community by offering lifestyle seminars and a work bee ministry.



Cedarbrook Fundraiser Creates Buzz

Twenty-four students at Cedarbrook Adventist Christian School in Port Hadlock got busy with fundraising when they learned about an opportunity to raise their teacher's hair.

For the past five years, students donated \$75–100 from their Christmas gift exchange classroom fund to help street children in Iquitos, Peru.

Greg Reseck, grades 3–8 teacher, challenged students to raise \$250 as a surprise gift to Paul and Sandi Opp from the People of Peru Project, who would soon be visiting the school. Reseck promised the top fundraisers could give him a buzz cut.

Students earned money over the weekend, asked friends for



Cedarbrook students raised nearly \$1,200 for the People of Peru Project to help poverty-stricken children.

donations and raided change jars. A Facebook friend pledged to match every dollar students raised.

During the Opps' presentation, they showed students images of poverty-stricken

children their age digging in garbage cans to find rotting food to stave off hunger. The students were even more thankful that they could help make a difference.

A giant check for \$1,200 left

the Opps momentarily speechless. "It was like watching not only their reaction, but the kids' in Peru as well," says Mariah Hamblett, a Cedarbrook student. "It warmed my heart."

Another student, Daniel Johnston, says, "The knowledge that you made the world a better place for someone is uplifting."

Isaac Allen, the top student fundraiser with \$321, earned the privilege of taking the first turn with the clipper to give Reseck his first buzz cut in more than 45 years.

Greg Reseck, Cedarbrook Adventist Christian School third- through eighth-grade teacher

Auburn Is Alive With 'The Sound of Music'

The halls of Auburn Adventist Academy (AAA) were alive this fall with the anticipation of a musical production scheduled for Nov. 10.

The hallways and classrooms at Auburn Adventist Academy are alive with *The Sound of Music*.

The words "Leisl," "Maria" and "audition" have been heard in conversations all over campus as the dramatic parts were cast and the practices set for the beloved

musical, *The Sound of Music*.

Melia Williams joined the AAA team as choral and home arts director. She is passionate about music and has been directing musicals at Adventist academies around the country for the last 30 years.

"My personal music philosophy is that if you want to learn, then I want to teach you," says Williams. "You don't have to have an extraordinary gift to be found worthy of making music. We can work to develop our talents."

The production of a musical can be a lot of work, but Williams is getting everyone

involved, including having her sewing class make blouses for the Von Trapp children.

"I think the musical is going to be really fun," says Olympia Hunt, who will be playing the smallest Von Trapp child, Gretl. "It is going to be a lot of work, but I am really excited about getting to work with and know new people."

Through music and creative skills, Williams desires to give students a voice and a confidence that creativity can come out in a variety of ways.

Jessi Turner, AAA GLEANER correspondent



Alumni Step Into Leadership Positions

Cushman, Wagner, Bigger Named

At the start of the new school year, Walla Walla University (WWU) filled key leadership positions with three alumni.

Robert Cushman was named the vice president for academic administration. Before his appointment, Cushman was chair of the university's biological sciences department, where he also taught biology classes. In addition, he has taught classes in the WWU School of Education and Psychology and in the general studies honors program.

As the university's chief academic officer, Cushman will be responsible for leadership in all academic programs. "Dr. Cushman has demonstrated outstanding leadership in his department,

and we are confident that he will lead the academic activities of this university with professional expertise," says Steve Rose, WWU interim president.

Cushman is a 1975 WWU biology graduate. He also holds a doctoral degree in geology from the Colorado School of Mines and a master's degree in geology from Loma Linda University.

He has served at WWU since 2008, coming from Loma Linda University where he was the earth and biological sciences department chairman. Cushman and his wife, Judy, a school psychologist and a WWU mentor, have two children.

Also a WWU graduate, Jodi Wagner, who has been the vice president for market-

ing and enrollment services for the past four years, will be expanding her administrative role as she becomes vice president for university relations and advancement. She will now lead the areas of marketing, enrollment services, development and alumni relations.

Before coming to WWU, Wagner was the director of client planning and strategy services for 10 years at Coffey Communications, a health care publication company in Walla Walla, Wash.

Wagner majored in mass communications at WWU and completed concentrated studies in business and English, graduating in 1992. Wagner and her husband, Jeff, also a WWU graduate, have three children.

Darold Bigger, a 1966 and 1994 graduate, is the new assistant to the president. Bigger will serve half-time in the president's office and continue his work in the classroom as a social work and religion professor.

Bigger was a pastor for 22 years, more than half that time as the Walla Walla University Church senior pastor. He also served in the military and at retirement was the senior chaplain of the U.S. Navy Reserve. Bigger and his wife, Barbara, former WWU bookstore manager, have two children, one of whom died in 1996.

Rosa Jimenez, WWU university relations director



CHRIS DRAKE

Robert Cushman



CHRIS DRAKE

Jodi Wagner



ERIC ASHLEY

Darold Bigger

Adventist Health News Notes



Melody Gabriel, new Adventist Health board member.

ADVENTIST HEALTH WELCOMES NEW NORTHWEST BOARD MEMBER

Melody Gabriel has been appointed to the Adventist Health board of directors, according to Ricardo B. Graham, board chairman.

Gabriel fills a position previously held by Lynn Creitz. Creitz, a businessman from the Portland, Ore., area, contributed more than 12 years of committed service as a dedicated member of the Adventist Health board of directors. Graham acknowledged Creitz's steadfast support and guidance over the years.

Gabriel is the vice president of operations and an owner of Generations LLC, a Portland-based management company for large senior-living campuses. In addition, she is an owner/member of three senior-living campuses in Portland, greater San Diego, Calif., and Walla Walla, Wash. Gabriel is also the

managing member of White Gabriel White.

With more than 20 years of marketing and management experience, Gabriel has an operational and leadership development background as well. She has been with Generations LLC since graduating from Pacific Union College with a bachelor of science degree. She is also a board member of the Oregon

Health Foundation and serves as its treasurer.

TILLAMOOK COUNTY GENERAL HOSPITAL A TOP PERFORMER

The Joint Commission recently recognized 620 U.S. hospitals as top performers in adhering to evidence-based care practices that enhance patient outcomes. Tillamook (Ore.) County General Hospital was one of only five Oregon hospitals recognized on this list.

For its 2012 report, The Joint Commission analyzed the performance of accredited hospitals on 45 accountability measures included in the organization's Key Quality Measures program for all of 2011. The measures are related to myocardial infarction, heart failure, pneumonia, surgical care, stroke care and children's asthma care, among others. To be recognized as a "Top Performer on Key Quality Measures," a hospital had to meet or exceed 95 percent per-

formance on a composite score that included all accountability measures reported to The Joint Commission.

In addition, Tillamook Medical Group was recently notified by the Oregon Health Authority that all three of its clinic locations have been awarded Tier 2 Patient-Centered Primary Care Home (PCH) recognition.

The PCH designation means that these clinics are recognized as having a commitment to quality, coordinated services that are focused on the best possible care for each patient. The clinics have also demonstrated their ability to provide comprehensive services on-site and through partnerships with other providers in the community. Organizing care around the patient, working in teams and coordinating services are all hallmarks of this new medical home model.

Brittany Dobbs, Adventist Health GLEANER correspondent

NEW SOCIAL MEDIA VENTURES FOR NORTHWEST HOSPITALS

Adventist Medical Center recently introduced its **LivingWell Bistro blog**. The blog includes tips on healthy eating, recipes and more at livingwellbistro.com/bistro-blog. Walla Walla General Hospital launched a **Pinterest page**. The page offers healthy recipes and tips on wellness, fitness and more. Visit and repin at pinterest.com/wwgh.

Walla Walla General Hospital's Pinterest page is filled with fun, engaging content that aims to improve community wellness.



Northwest Mission Institute

CELEBRATES FIRST GRADUATES

Jason Worf, Northwest Mission Institute director (bottom row, right) celebrates with graduates, staff and NPUC leaders.



HEATHER MOOR

The first graduation ceremony of the Northwest Mission Institute (NMI) was full of rich, heartfelt stories of how God is leading in each graduate's life. There was plenty of laughter and even a few tears at the Kennewick (Wash.) Church on Sept. 7 as the group reviewed the memories they had made in just a few, short months together. Lives were changed, and the students left with a new vigor for life and evangelism.

When one student, Ross Brower, was asked to describe his NMI experience in a single word, he chose "immersed" because "there is nothing like being immersed in the Lord's work like we are. It was amazing. [I] don't ever want to quit."

Joe Harris described his experience as "transforming." Harris came to NMI looking to be "brought further" and indeed was.

Commencement speaker Gordon Pifher, North Pacific Union Conference innovation, leadership and stewardship director, likened the graduating class to the first disciples shortly after Jesus had ascended to heaven. The disciples didn't have a clue of the degree to which Christ planned to use them to reach the world. Pifher reminded the audience of God's regard for those early disciples with their varying talents, education backgrounds and social statuses, and of His plans for these graduates too — "thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give a future and a hope" (Jer. 29:11, NKJV).

As the ceremony's grand finale, a candlelighting service represented the work the students have ahead of them. A main candle represented the Light of the World, from which the students lit their candles and took them into an audience waiting with unlit candles. The students lit those candles closest to the aisle,

and then it was up to the audience to light each other's candles. Similarly, NMI is shaping Bible worker coordinators to enter churches and train lay members to go and make disciples. With such an army of workers rightly trained, how soon the message of a crucified, risen and soon-coming Savior might be carried to the whole world, as Ellen White points out (*Education*, p. 271). Already many of the graduates are filling Bible worker coordinator positions in the Upper Columbia Conference.

If you or someone you know is interested in learning to sharpen their faith-sharing skills and leading their church to do the same, or to read more stories about the graduates, visit NMI online at missioninstitute.org.

Jessica Atwell, Northwest Mission Institute outreach coordinator



northwest mission institute

MILESTONES

Haynal 65th

Andrew and Helen Haynal celebrated their 65th wedding anniversary with family at their home in Battle Ground, Wash., on June 23, 2012.

During the celebration, they used the same wedding cake topper they had 65 years ago. Also, in May, Helen celebrated her 85th birthday with 16 family members in Leavenworth, Wash.

Andrew Haynal met Helen Babienko while he was studying medicine at Loma Linda



Andrew and Helen Haynal

University and she was studying at the White Memorial School of Nursing. They went on to lead a rich life of service in Florida, Liberia, Thailand, India, Pakistan, Guyana, California and the Philippines. They raised six children and have been blessed with 12 grandchildren and a great-grandchild.

Umphrey 70th

Arlie and Sylva Umphrey celebrated their 70th wedding anniversary on June 24, 2012, with a family barbeque at their son and daughter-in-law's house.

Arlie became engaged to Sylva May Pratt in 1940 and then enlisted in the Marine Corps in 1941. While he was on leave in June 1942, they were married in Boise, Idaho. Once he was discharged from the Army, the Umphreys



Arlie and Sylva Umphrey moved to La Grande, Ore., where Arlie worked for the Union Pacific Railroad and in logging.

They moved to Ketchikan, Alaska, in September 1964, where Arlie worked in road construction and logging. Then in 1973, he went to work for the Ketchikan School District as a custodian. Sylva also began working for the Ketchikan School District as a custodian in 1975. Both retired from the school district in 1988 and moved to Hermiston, Ore., before buying a home in La Grande in 2000. Ten years later, they moved to Greenwood, Ind., to be near their son.

The Umphrey family includes Arla Gordenain of Ketchikan; Harry and Trudy Umphrey of Greenwood; Mike and Maria Umphrey of London, Ontario, Canada; Elizabeth and Mike McKelvy of Ketchikan; John Umphrey of Rapid City, S.D.; 13 grandchildren, 24 great-grandchildren, 3 step-great-grandchildren and a great-great-grandchild.

Winn 50th

Ted and Pat Winn celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary with family and friends on Aug. 6, 2011, at Harris Park near Milton-Free-water, Ore. The dinner occasion was prepared and hosted

by their children and spouses, Mark and Stacey Winn and Wayne and Elleen Gascon, all of Walla Walla, Wash. The Winns later continued celebrating their anniversary by vacationing in Hawaii with hosts Hugh and Betty Winn.

Ted and Pat are both graduates of Walla Walla College (now Walla Walla University). They spent their entire working careers in Adventist education. Schools where they served include Blue Mountain Academy, Penn.; Southern Missionary College (now Southern Adventist University), Tenn.; Bass Memorial Academy, Miss.; Upper Columbia Academy, Wash.; Monterey Bay Academy, Calif.; and Thunderbird Adventist Academy, Ariz.

The Winns were married on Aug. 6, 1961, in Butte, Mont., where they lived for much of their growing-up years. They are now retired and live in College Place, Wash.

BIRTHS

CARTER — Alexis Leann was born Aug. 2, 2012, to Dustin J. and Heidi L. (Evans) Carter, Thompson Falls, Mont.

KARMY — Benjamin Ryan was born Aug. 14, 2012, to Jeff and Melanie (McGee) Karmy, Medford, Ore.

LINFOOT — Emmett James was born Aug. 1, 2012, to Nathan and Anna (Konstaninova) Linfoot, Portland, Ore.

MOOR — Corrigan Alan was born Aug. 3, 2012, to Steve and Allison (Schmidt) Moor, Beaverton, Ore.

RODGERS — Samuel Tanner was born Aug. 25, 2012, to Steve and Lindsey (Henriksen) Rodgers, Eugene, Ore.

WEDDINGS

CHURCH-WETTERLIN — Haley Church and Joshua Wetterlin were married Aug. 7, 2012, in Playa del Carmen, Mexico. They are making their home in Tigard, Ore. Haley is the daughter of Pat and Carol Church. Josh is the son of Ed and Cheryl "Share" (Benjamin) Wetterlin.

LARGE-BENSCOTER — Cori Large and Shane Bencoter were married July 29, 2012, in Deadwood, Ore., where they are making their home. Cori is the daughter of Don and Debbie (Harroun) Large. Shane is the son of Les and Ann (Young) Bencoter.

NASH-WOODARD — Jessica Nash and Justin Woodard were married Sept. 2, 2012, in Newberg, Ore., where they are making their home. Jessica is the daughter of Edward and Linda (Sanchez) Nash. Justin is the son of Dale and Christy (Lund) Woodard.

PEREZ-HARDEN — Amanda Perez and Marcus Harden were married Aug. 10, 2012, in Cumming, Ga. They are making their home in Wenatchee, Wash. Amanda is the daughter of Jose and Carmen A. (Ruiz) Perez. Marcus is the son of Stephen P. and Ruby G. (Eastwood) Harden.

REEVES-SOULÉ — Heather Reeves and James Soulé were married Sept. 3, 2012, in Walla Walla, Wash. They are making their home in Oregon City, Ore. Heather is the daughter of Bruce and Sandra Reeves. James is the son of John and Teresa Soulé.

YUNGER-RUMSEY — Cari Yunger and Michael Rumsey were married May 27, 2012, Chattanooga, Tenn., where they are making their home. Cari is the daughter of Kevin and Rhonda (Rohlman) Yunger. Michael is the son of Mark and Susan (Kelley) Rumsey.

BAKER — Prince Valjean, 88; born Feb. 16, 1924, Geary, Okla.; died July 11, 2012, Monroe, Ore. Surviving: son, David, Monroe; daughters, Virginia Baker, Sacramento, Calif.; Marguerite Burrill, Everett, Wash.; 10 grandchildren and 16 great-grandchildren.

BOHLMAN — Stella O., 100; born March 19, 1912, Goodwater, Saskatchewan, Canada; died July 13, 2012, College Place, Wash.

BROCK-WATTS — Sadie (Vigneron), 96; born June 11, 1915, Walla Walla, Wash.; died Dec. 25, 2011, Kennewick, Wash. Surviving: son, Robert "Butch" Brock, Kennewick; daughters, Myrnalee Brock Kivett, Happy Valley, Ore.; Judy Kay Brock Webb, Kennewick; 6 grandchildren and 15 great-grandchildren.

CANTON — Yvonne E. (Mosher), 79; born Jan. 10, 1933, Clackamas, Ore.; died June 18, 2012, Woodland, Wash. Surviving: son, Michael, Vancouver, Wash.; daughters, Cindy Haney, Battle Ground, Wash.; Beth Tiegs, Hockinson, Wash.; Carol Peppel, Vancouver; 14 grandchildren, 7 great-grandchildren and a great-great-grandchild.

CARLSON — Oscar LeRoy, 92; born May 4, 1920, Troy, Idaho; died June 17, 2012, Troy. Surviving: sons, David and Dennis, both of Troy; daughter, Victoria Iivulka, Sodegaura, Japan; sisters, Ivy Ewert, College Place, Wash.; Maybelle Kegley, Sacramento, Calif.; Ramona Large, College Place; 11 grandchildren, 27 great-grandchildren and 9 great-great-grandchildren.

DAVIDSON — Earl, 103; born Aug. 25, 1908, County of Republic, Kan.; died Feb. 8, 2012, Prosser, Wash. Surviving: daughters, Ann Reeves, College Place, Wash.; Janette Davidson, Prescott, Ariz.; a grandchild and 2 great-grandchildren.

HEALY — Mildred Lucile (Baker), 78; born Sept. 13, 1933, Cedar, Okla.; died July 6, 2012, Caldwell, Idaho. Surviving: sons, Dennis and Roger, both of Caldwell; daughters, Karen Loader, Caldwell; Lorraine Rafferty, Selma, Ore.; 13 grandchildren and 27 great-grandchildren.

HEWLETT — Gordon Trueman, 94; born Feb. 23, 1918, Windsor, Ontario, Canada; died May 5, 2012, Rogue River, Ore. Surviving: son, Ted, Goodlettsville, Tenn.; daughters, Carol Gasser, Keizer, Ore.; Darlene Nash, Fletcher, N.C.; 4 grandchildren and 6 great-grandchildren.

HUNTER — Willard L. "Verne," 90; born July 9, 1921, North Platte, Neb.; died June 28, 2012, Salem, Ore. Surviving: wife, Mildred "Mickey"; sons, Ted, Kirkland, Wash.; Corwin "Corky," Aloha, Ore.; 2 grandchildren and 2 great-grandchildren.

JENSEN — S. William, 82; born Aug. 3, 1929, Loma Linda, Calif.; died May 7, 2012, Sheridan, Mont. Surviving: son, William I., Sheridan; daughters, Deborah Jensen, Chico, Calif.; Sue Hanson, Seattle, Wash.; sister, Myrna Wright, Avon Park, Fla.; 11 grandchildren and 10 great-grandchildren.

KIRKPATRICK — Charles A.K., 96; born Oct. 2, 1915, Blackfoot, Idaho; died July 24, 2012, Bozeman, Mont. Surviving: son, William, Bozeman; daughters, Sharon Kirkpatrick, Portland, Ore.; Heather Kirkpatrick, Helena, Mont.; and brother, Glen, Portland.

LEROY — Ronald Raymond, 66; born Oct. 7, 1945, Walla Walla, Wash.; died Feb. 4, 2012, Walla Walla. Surviving: wife, Jan (Steen); son, James R., Lewiston, Idaho; daughter, Laura Moody, Salem, Ore.; and a grandchild.

MORRISON — Charles Edward, 89; born Dec. 9, 1922, Eagle, Idaho; died June 7, 2012, Tonasket, Wash. Surviving: wife, Vera (Coleman); sons, Roland, Caldwell, Idaho; Larry, Beaverton, Ore.; daughters, Linda Donley, Bellingham, Wash.; Karen Coleman, Tonasket; 6 grandchildren and 11 great-grandchildren.

REYNOLDS — Douglas T., 69; born April 13, 1943, Louisville, Ken.; died July 12, 2012, Yakima, Wash. Surviving: wife, Rosalyn (Belin), Union Gap, Wash.; sons, Douglas Reynolds and Mark Wittlake, both of Yakima; daughters, Brenda Zambrana, Fremont, Calif.; Paulena French, Colbert, Wash.; Laura Dobbins, Walla Walla, Wash.; brother, James, Milwaukie, Ore.; sister, Rosalie Marois, Puyallup, Wash.; and 9 grandchildren.

RODMAN — Virginia Elizabeth "Betty" (Schoonover), 88; born June 21, 1924, Endicott, N.Y.; died July 6, 2012, Tillamook, Ore. Surviving: sons, Gary, Catlett, Va.; Keith, Auburn, Wash.; David, Yucaipa, Calif.; daughter, Ginny Gabel, Tillamook; 8 grandchildren and 3 great-grandchildren.

STACY — Charles Earl, 82; born May 26, 1930, Bozeman, Mont.; died June 14, 2012, Amboy, Wash. Surviving: wife, Addie Nell (Rasmussen); sons, Charles Jr., Rockport, Wash.; Ted, Rochester, Wash.; Leonard G., Amboy; daughters, Annetta Goodpasture, Amboy; Oletta Stacy, of Washington; 7 grandchildren and 6 great-grandchildren.

STEVENSON — Doyle I., 63; born Nov. 29, 1948, Glendale, Calif.; died Feb. 5, 2012, Salem, Ore. Surviving: wife, Erma; son, Andrew, Sano, Japan; daughters, Sheila Stevenson and Michelle Stevenson, both of Portland, Ore.; brothers, Dwayne, Salem; Don, Milwaukie, Ore.; sisters, Doris Jean Dasher, Gresham, Ore.; Shirley

Kimble, Portland; Sandra Barnett, Kirkland, Wash.; and a grandchild.

STROHL — Iva (Craig) Hensley Day, 86; born June 14, 1925, Richland, Ore.; died Jan. 18, 2012, Yakima, Wash. Surviving: daughters, Sheryll (Hensley) Hisey, Yakima; Linda (Hensley) Steel; stepson, Warren Strohl; 3 grandchildren and 7 great-grandchildren.

SWIER — Anita Jean (Brownell), 76; born, Oct. 13, 1935, Yakima, Wash.; died June 29, 2012, Yakima. Surviving: daughter, Debbie Swier, Puyallup, Wash.; stepsons, Randy Swier; Tom Swier, of Georgia; David Swier Jr.; brothers, R. Rudy Brownell, Kannapolis, N.C.; E. Dennis Brownell, Yakima; and numerous step-grandchildren.

UNGER — Helen A. (Bradley), 86; born Aug. 18, 1925, Seattle, Wash.; died July 9, 2012, Phoenix, Ore. Surviving: daughters, Shirley Lafon, Veneta, Ore.; JoAnne Large, Phoenix; brother, Stanley Bradley, Checotah, Okla.; 8 grandchildren, 16 great-grandchildren and 2 great-great-grandchildren.

WEISS — Grace L. (Barham), 101; born Sept. 21, 1910, Gridley, Calif.; died Feb. 26, 2012, East Wenatchee, Wash. Surviving: daughters, Joyce Mendal, Seattle, Wash.; Gaylene Wardell, Sun City, Ariz.; Sandy Davis, East Wenatchee; Susan Snelson, Snohomish, Wash.; 14 grandchildren, 9 great-grandchildren and 5 great-great-grandchildren.

WITT — Marion (Illchen) Seely, 87; born May 5, 1925, Bismarck, N.D.; died Aug. 6, 2012, Walla Walla, Wash. Surviving: husband, Harry O.; sons, Sydney Seely, College Place, Wash.; Zane Seely, Burien, Wash.; stepson, Warren Witt, Mililani, Hawaii; daughter, Cathy (Seely) Kahn, Kennewick, Wash.; 7 grandchildren and a great-grandchild.



Letters

continued from p. 4

WAYNE BLAKELY ... READERS RESPOND

Identity in Christ

Thank you to Wayne Blakely and the authors and editors of this edition of the *GLEANER* for a Christ-centered perspective of a “hot topic” in Adventism and our culture at large. It is important for me to remember, as Wayne points out, that “helpful instruction for our good isn’t always pleasant to the ear. ... But the Bible isn’t all about our immediate pleasure. It’s all about our eternal salvation.” Oh that we each could keep our daily lives in the context of our Father’s eternal perspective. Thank you for addressing this issue in the context of remembering the Christ from whom we gain our identity!

Lora Lucas, Ooltewah, Tenn.

Celibacy Questioned

God has clearly rescued Wayne Blakely ... But his story is by no means typical of all or even most Seventh-day Adventist gay and lesbian people. Many are faithful, contributing church members who struggle to integrate their spirituality with their sexuality, who believe they should remain chaste until they find a partner to whom they commit their life. It is people like this who are portrayed in *Seventh-Gay Adventists*. A number of church leaders have given positive reviews of the film and encouraged others to view it for a better understanding of the people involved. Wayne seems to suggest that the only biblically accepted response for a gay or lesbian person is either marriage to an opposite-sex partner or lifetime celibacy. ... God made us to live in a close relationship with an-

other person. He holds up the ideal of a committed, lifetime relationship. In the New Testament, Paul says that celibacy is a gift given to some people so that they can devote their lives entirely to working for God, but he never suggests that it is a requirement for anyone. That is why our church has always considered a celibate priesthood to be an unnatural lifestyle.

Carrol Grady, Snohomish, Wash.

Not Realistic for Most

For every Wayne Blakely there are hundreds of gay men who have prayed and begged God to change them. Wayne’s story is exceptional, not the norm. It does not offer realistic hope! Wayne’s story is convenient to bolster the church’s teachings, but it is very discouraging to those who have sincerely prayed for years and done everything they could to be something other than who they are. Eventually most leave the church in despair and doubt that God loves them. It doesn’t help them that the church regularly reinforces that message. Too many of these men take their lives in despair and agony. ... I urge you to consider prayerfully that Wayne’s story is not what can be expected for 99.9 percent of Adventist gay people. And to promote it only brings more despair and discouragement. It does little or nothing to help gay Adventists. It just sounds wonderful to straight Adventists who have no clue about the reality of our struggle.

Name withheld

North Pacific Union Conference

Offering

- Nov. 3** — Local Church Budget;
- Nov. 10** — Annual Sacrifice (Global Mission) World Budget;
- Nov. 17** — Local Church Budget;
- Nov. 24** — Local Conference Advance.

Walla Walla University

- Nov. 3** — Piano vespers, 5 p.m. at the University Church;
- Nov. 8** — OPS Amateur Hour, university talent show sponsored by men’s residence halls club, 8 p.m. at the Alumni Gymnasium;
- Nov. 10** — Wind symphony concert, 4 p.m. at the University Church;
- Nov. 11** — Distinguished Faculty Lecture: Karen Tetz, professor of nursing, presents “The Caregiving Journey,” 7 p.m. at the Melvin K. West Fine Arts Center Auditorium.

Oregon

Oregon Adventist Men’s Chorus

- Nov. 10** — Oregon Adventist Men’s Chorus celebrates what

God did in South Africa during August 2012 at 4:30 p.m. at the Vancouver Adventist Community Church, 9711 NE St. Johns Road, Vancouver, WA 98665. Learn more about the concert in the dark, divine appointments, and more amazing stories from Dan and Betsy Matthews and OAMC singers.

Upper Columbia

Missing Members

The Athol Church in Athol, Idaho, is looking for the following missing members: Rusty Fontaine, Jennifer Ove, Les Ove and Char Ward. If you have any information regarding these missing members, please contact Daniel Dreher at 208-265-2712 or healthstart@frontier.com.

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GLEANER Statement of Ownership, Management and Circulation

		YEAR AVERAGE	AUG. ISSUE
This Statement of Ownership, Management and Circulation was filed on September 25, 2012, with the U.S. Postal Service for the <i>GLEANER</i> , for publication number 0746-5874, a magazine owned and published by the North Pacific Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 5709 N. 20th St., Ridgefield, WA 98642. It is published 12 times a year at a subscription price of \$13. The following figures for the extent and nature of the circulation apply to the year ending with the August 2012 issue of the Gleaner and were printed in the November issue of this publication.	Total number of copies	42,017	41,851
	Total paid circulation mailed outside-county	41,790	41,623
	Total paid circulation mailed in-county	0	0
	Sales through dealers, carriers, street vendors	0	0
	Other classes mailed through USPS	0	0
	Total paid distribution	41,790	41,623
	Total free or nominal rate outside-county	127	128
	Total free or nominal rate in-county	0	0
	Other classes mailed through USPS	0	0
	Total free or nominal rate outside the mail	0	0
	Total free or nominal rate distribution	127	128
	Total distribution	41,917	41,751
	Copies not distributed	100	100
	Total	42,017	41,851
	Percent paid	99.70%	99.69%

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EMPLOYMENT

ADVENTIST UNIVERSITY OF HEALTH SCIENCES (formerly Florida Hospital College of Health Sciences) in Orlando, FL, seeks an assistant program administrator for the Nurse Anesthesia Program. Qualifications: CRNA with current recertification, eligible for Florida licensure, minimum of master's degree from regionally accredited institution with doctoral degree preferred, academic experience. This is a faith-based institution which seeks candidates who fit its unique culture and mission. Submit letter of interest and CV to Dr. Alescia DeVasher Bethea, alescia.devasher@fhchs.edu or fax 407-303-9578.

PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT PROGRAM at Union College seeks clinical director. Faculty position offers opportunities for teaching and advising beyond typical responsibilities of the position, such as developing clinical sites, working with clinical preceptors, tracking students, and evaluating student rotations. Master's degree and three years PA clinical experience required. Contact Michelle Buller, PA Program Director, mibuller@ucollege.edu, 402-486-2527.

WALLA WALLA UNIVERSITY seeks applicants for a full-time faculty position in biblical studies to begin January 2013. For more information and to apply, please visit <http://jobs.wallawalla.edu>.

WALLA WALLA UNIVERSITY seeks applicants for a full-time faculty position as dean of the School of Education and Psychology to begin July 2013. For more information and to apply, please visit <http://jobs.wallawalla.edu>.

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EVENT

ADVENTIST SINGLE ADULT MINISTRIES NEW YEAR'S RETREAT 2012 — Dec. 28, 2012–Jan. 1, 2013, at Camp Kulaqua, Fla. Bring in the New Year with other singles from across the nation. Music by Charles Haugabrooks. Activities include canoeing, go-karting, seminars, zip-lining, rodeo, New Year's Eve celebration, and more. Contact 386-454-1351 or www.campkulaqua.com.

REACH YOUR WORLD

Southern Union Evangelism Council 2012 — three days of inspiration, training and relaxation for evangelists, pastors, lay evangelists and conference administrators. Presenters include Mark and Ernestine Finley, Ron Clouzet, Ron Smith, and Ivan Williams. Dec. 3–6, Daytona Beach, Fla. More information: www.southernunion.com/evangelism, 407-257-6847 or suevangelism@southernunion.com.

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Sunset Schedule

November	2	9	16	23	30
Alaska Conference					
Anchorage	5:56	4:38	4:21	4:06	3:53
Fairbanks	5:27	4:04	3:42	3:21	3:03
Juneau	5:06	3:50	3:35	3:23	3:13
Ketchikan	5:07	3:53	3:41	3:30	3:23
Idaho Conference					
Boise	6:35	5:26	5:19	5:14	5:10
La Grande	5:39	4:30	4:22	4:16	4:12
Pocatello	6:21	5:13	5:06	5:01	4:57
Montana Conference					
Billings	6:00	4:50	4:42	4:36	4:32
Havre	5:58	4:48	4:39	4:32	4:26
Helena	6:12	5:02	4:54	4:48	4:43
Miles City	5:48	4:38	4:30	4:23	4:19
Missoula	6:19	5:09	5:01	4:55	4:50
Oregon Conference					
Coos Bay	6:08	4:59	4:52	4:46	4:43
Medford	6:04	4:56	4:49	4:44	4:40
Portland	5:57	4:48	4:40	4:34	4:29
Upper Columbia Conference					
Pendleton	5:41	4:32	4:24	4:18	4:14
Spokane	5:31	4:21	4:12	4:06	4:01
Walla Walla	5:38	4:29	4:21	4:15	4:10
Wenatchee	5:43	4:33	4:25	4:18	4:13
Yakima	5:46	4:36	4:28	4:22	4:17
Washington Conference					
Bellingham	5:49	4:38	4:29	4:22	4:17
Seattle	5:51	4:41	4:32	4:25	4:21

Daylight Savings Time ends Nov. 4

Add one minute for each 13 miles west. Subtract one minute for each 13 miles east.



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Oregon Adventist
MEN'S CHORUS

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4:30 pm
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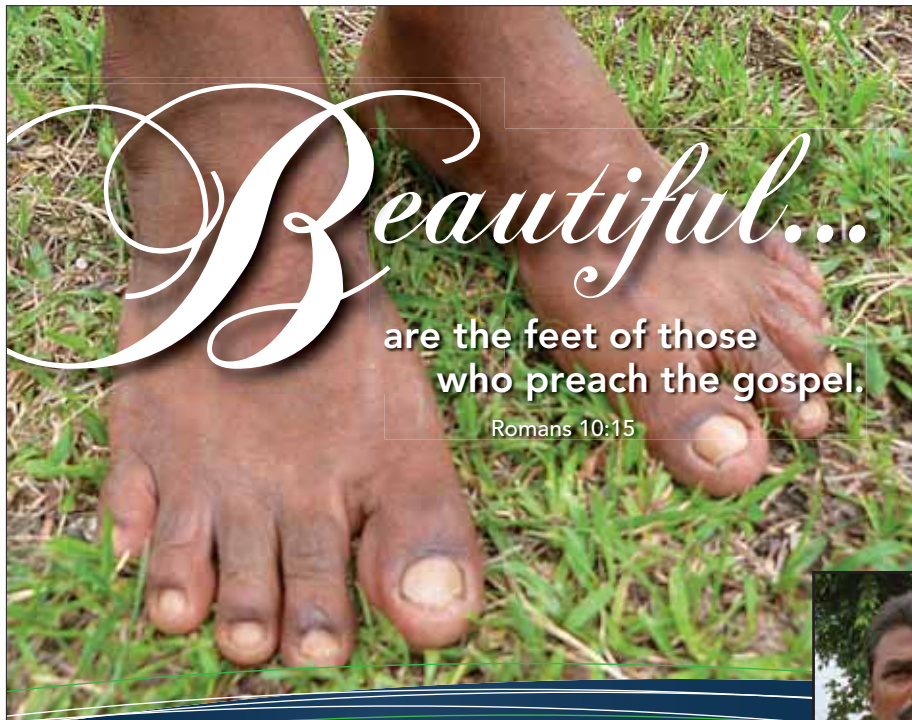
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Plans

He was sitting in the audience that night with his new fling. That soft, gentle testimony hit him with the full weight of conviction.

In a former life, I managed a Christian radio station with a musical format ranging from Ralph Carmichael to Michael Card. This agitated some saints who occasionally would send me laboriously handwritten letters, detailing the evils of any beat foreign to John Philip Sousa.

Yet most found harmony in the center of our format — a series of Scripture-song albums by Maranatha Music under the name of Praise (vocal) and Praise Strings (instrumental). These were so popular with our listeners that when we heard the Praise Strings Orchestra was on tour, we jumped at the opportunity for a local benefit concert.

Following a flood of on-air promotions and door-to-door flyers around the community, the big night came. The auditorium was packed as everyone waited to hear their favorite songs by their favorite Christian orchestra.

Backstage, though, our stomachs were in knots. The Praise Strings Orchestra was not what we had naively expected, not the musicians of our beloved albums. Those pulling out their violins and cellos, flutes and trombones, were amateurs: moms and dads, grandpas and grandmas, and a sprinkling of high-school-age novices. Our audience was in for a let-down, and we were in for an embarrassment.

Our apprehension was confirmed once the music began. These plucky players performed the familiar songs from the Praise Strings albums but added their own unique flavor — a nagging affinity for off-key tonality, punctuated by an occasional squawk or wheeze. We were slipping further down into our seats of mortification ... when something remarkable happened.

During a blessed break in the music, one of the orchestra members

stepped to the microphone and shared a simple testimony. He told of his marriage, which had been ready to crash-and-burn but had been saved with his own divinely renewed focus for family. He challenged each of those in the audience to think again about their own commitments, their own priorities. You could've heard a proverbial pin drop.

Not only did this heartfelt story divert our minds from the music for a few moments, but it started a chain reaction I learned about a few days later.

Unbeknownst to us, one of our radio listeners had just left his wife and run off with his female assistant. He was sitting in the audience that night with his new fling. That soft, gentle testimony hit him with the full weight of conviction. Walking out of the hall that evening he had turned to his companion and said, "We can't do this anymore. I need to re-engage with my wife."

And thus, the letter he wrote me a week later — a letter that reminded me that the Christian journey is more, much more, than just music.

I sat back and re-evaluated my benchmarks for success. A heartfelt, personal story nearly always trumps the finest performance. Even the imperfect efforts we put forth can make a difference when the Spirit intervenes. Moses with halting speech led a nation to freedom. Sarah with barren womb became the mother of God's chosen people. Saul with misplaced passion became Paul, beloved apostle.

Our finest plans are best when offered first to the Master, who may have something entirely different and delightfully far better in mind.

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